

Report to Sustainable Development Panel
26 September 2012
Report of Head of planning services
Subject Extensions to houses – Advice Note

Item

5

Purpose

To advise members of a proposed advisory note for people considering extending their dwellings and to recommend that the Panel recommends to Cabinet that this note is approved as a development management guidance document.

A copy of the proposed note is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. A summary of the background and proposed methods of publicising and using the note are provided in brief in this report.

Recommendations

That the panel recommends Cabinet to approve the 'Extensions to houses – Advisory Note' as a development management guidance document.

Financial Consequences

The use of an advisory note is unlikely to have financial consequences but will make it easier for citizens and customers to self-serve as simple advice will be provided without the need to contact a planning officer.

Corporate Priority

The advice note meets the corporate priority 'To make Norwich a city of character and culture' as it supports the effective management of development within the city and encourages a high standard of design.

Contact Officers

Mike Burrell	01603-212525
Chris Bennett	01603-212513
Anne Napier-Derere	01603-212502

Background Documents

None

Report

Background

1. The need for an advisory guidance note has been identified by development management staff linked to a review of the pre-application advice currently provided by the Planning Service.
2. Currently, advice to householders considering extending or altering their property is provided free of charge by the service. The demand for this advice is high, with over 250 requests for advice being received in 2011. This figure excludes both simple requests for information or guidance, which are only responded to verbally and requests seeking clarification as to whether planning permission is required for proposed works to dwellings, which receive a standard letter or email in response, directing people to the Planning Portal.
3. The majority of householders who contact the Planning Service prior to submitting a formal planning application wish to receive some guidance as to whether their proposals are likely to be considered acceptable. Although it is not possible to provide certainty in such matters, officers do often suggest amendments or alterations to proposals at this stage to address potential concerns and will indicate whether or not a scheme is likely to receive officer support.
4. Often this is a person's first contact with the planning system and, unless they have instructed professional assistance, many people will seek help and reassurance about the process as well as the likely outcome. This can result in potentially significant amounts of officer time being spent on relatively simple and similar cases. Whilst this is of clear benefit to the recipient of that advice, it is arguably not the most effective use of limited resources.
5. On September 6th 2012, the government announced that, to increase economic activity, it will consult shortly on changes to "increase permitted development rights for extensions to homes and business premises in non-protected areas for a three-year period". Ministers have indicated that the consultation will cover removing the need for planning permission for extensions of more than three metres. According to press reports, if implemented, people would be able to build single storey rear extensions of up to eight metres long for detached homes and six metres for others without the need for planning permission.
6. Any changes in permitted development rights nationally will not affect this guidance which provides advice and information for both extensions which do and do not require planning permission. The reader of the advice note is guided to the planning portal which provides up-to-date information on national policy for extensions.

Development & proposed publication

7. The advice note has been prepared using the knowledge and experience of the Planning Service. It has been structured in such a way so as to provide easily accessible and understandable advice and the use of simple illustrations assists this greatly.

8. The advice provides guidance to those considering extending their homes and explains how an application will be assessed. It refers to the impact on neighbours and design issues and provides guidance on extensions to the front, side and rear of dwellings, alterations to the roof and innovative designs. It also signposts people to other issues which will potentially need to be addressed, such as trees, refuse and recycling storage, cycle storage and building regulations approval.
9. It is intended to only publish the note electronically, through the Council's website, although it will be available to download and print through this means if a hardcopy is required. This will not only result in minimal publication costs but will also enable the advice to be revised or updated if necessary.
10. If the recommendation is accepted by the Panel and Cabinet, the advice note would not carry the same weight, in planning terms, as an adopted supplementary planning document within the local plan.
11. However, the guidance would still carry some weight and would be a material consideration in the determination of formal applications for extensions to houses. Both for applications and in an appeal situation, published guidance can be used to demonstrate the difference between good and bad design. It will be necessary to consider how much weight should be given to the guidance in any particular case and each planning proposal is determined on its own merits.
12. However, applicants would be encouraged to refer to the advice note and, if a proposal has been designed contrary to the guidance, then the justification for this would need to be clearly understood. It would then be necessary to consider whether this was sufficient to outweigh the advice contained within the note in that particular case.
13. The advice note supplements and provides guidance on issues that are addressed by relevant policies of the adopted East of England Plan 2008 (policy ENV7), the adopted Joint Core Strategy of Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk 2011 (policy 2) and the saved policies of the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan 2004 (saved policies HBE12 and EP22).
14. Once new local plan policies are adopted late in 2013, consideration will be given to adopting this advice note as a supplementary planning document to add to its weight in informing planning decisions.

Extensions to houses

Advice note

This advice note provides guidance on the design of extensions to houses. Most householders considering an extension know what size of extension they want, where they would like it to go and what they want it to look like. It explains the planning considerations that need to be taken into account in order to achieve an acceptable design to put forward for planning permission.



NORWICH
City Council

Is planning permission required?

If you wish to extend or alter your house you may require planning permission. Houses (not flats) benefit from 'permitted development rights' which allow for some small extensions to be constructed without the need for planning permission. This guide is for extensions where planning permission is likely to be required, however the general principles can also apply to smaller extensions that do not require planning permission.

For further information on whether planning permission is required please refer to the planning portal at www.planningportal.com

There are special requirements for properties in [conservation areas](#) in terms of the type and size of the extension, particularly in areas covered by article 4 directions.

Currently, three conservation areas in Norwich are partly covered by article 4 directions. These are the city centre, Bracondale and Heigham Grove. For more information on these areas please refer to www.norwich.gov.uk/article4directions.

Some housing developments built more recently, especially since the 1960s, may also have the usual permitted development rights removed as a condition of the original planning permission, especially if they had an unusual or specific design. If this is the case it will mean that even minor extensions will require planning permission.

If permitted development rights are withdrawn this will be stated on the original planning permission for the property. Any permissions dating from 1999 onwards are available to view via the [Planning Public Access system](#) on the council's website (www.norwich.gov.uk). If you do not hold a copy of a permission granted between the early 1960s and 1999 and wish to inspect a copy, you can do so in person at the planning reception in City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH or, if you are able to confirm the planning application reference number, we will be able to provide an electronic copy of the decision on receipt of a request to planning@norwich.gov.uk

Other types of permission that may be required

If your house is listed grade I, II* or II, you will also require listed building consent **for alterations inside and outside the house**.

Within conservation areas six weeks' notice needs to be given to the tree protection officer of any works to trees in order to consider whether the tree should have a **Tree Preservation Order (TPO)**. It is also important to check whether a tree already has a TPO.

Before you submit your planning application, it is also important to make sure that proposals will meet the requirements of **building regulations** so any permission gained does not subsequently have to be altered to meet changing requirements.



It is important to consider other requirements such as whether a building is listed grade I, II or II, whether the house is in a conservation area and whether any trees are protected.*

How will a planning application be assessed?

The following considerations from Local Plan policies will be taken into account when the council determines an application for an extension or alteration to a dwelling:

- How the extension relates to the existing appearance of the house and the character of the surrounding neighbourhood in terms of scale, size, shape, materials and design details.
- Neighbour impact in terms of possible overlooking, overshadowing or being overbearing.
- The change in the footprint of the house and/or building height and whether this will result in a cramped form of development in relation to the site.
- Taking into account existing building lines and visual continuity.

Other considerations

The extension may need to be designed around existing trees if they merit preservation. In some cases a tree may be removed if another tree or trees are planted elsewhere within the garden area to compensate for the loss.

Extensions should also consider including bin and cycling storage areas and if these are not already provided elsewhere in the house or its grounds. This will be particularly applicable if an extension will result in the loss of existing garage or storage provision.

If an extension is being proposed for ancillary use to the house, for example as annex accommodation, other considerations will be taken into account with regard to the appropriateness of the extension and further advice should be sought.

Right to neighbour privacy

It is important to consider the impact of any extension on neighbouring residents and their right to privacy, particularly with regard to garden and patio areas to the rear and sides of a property.

Design considerations to prevent direct overlooking include:

- the configuration of internal accommodation – where the different rooms are located within the house
- where window openings are positioned, for example avoiding windows in side elevations, particularly upper floors
- the use of high level windows at ground floor height with internal sill height of at least 1.6 metres that allow light in but prevent direct overlooking
- the use of obscure glass and restricted opening mechanisms
- high walls or fences between opposing ground floor windows.

It is important that sufficient distance is maintained between the back of houses. Norwich has a varied character and density of housing and expectations of space and privacy in rear gardens will differ depending on where you may

live in the city. In outer suburban areas it will generally be desirable to maintain greater distances between properties, for example a minimum of 20m. In Victorian inner suburbs and the city centre this distance may be much less depending on the existing character of development in the immediate neighbourhood.

Front extensions and porches

The front of a house is usually the part of the house most visible in the street and so the part of the house given most attention in terms of making a house look attractive.

In most cases large scale front extensions are unlikely to be considered acceptable as they usually result in significant change to the original appearance of a house. However, in some instances, for example detached houses with unique designs, the whole house may be able to be remodelled. It is therefore recommended that any large scale extensions to the front of a house are designed with sufficient architectural expertise in order that the appearance of a house is enhanced rather than spoilt.

Small scale front extensions, such as porches, are more likely to be considered acceptable as they have much less impact on the appearance of a house and can contribute to improving energy efficiency. It is important to note whether similar porches have already been constructed on neighbouring houses, as this is more likely to result in an application being considered acceptable, particularly for terraced houses.



Acceptable porch extension to a terrace house 'fit in' with the existing appearance of the house.

Side and rear extensions

The majority of extensions are to the side and rear of houses. These should be designed to respect the scale, size and shape of the original building. They should not dominate over the original house; materials should match as closely as possible; and detailing should match the existing design – for example, new and existing windows should line through with each other horizontally and vertically and proportions should be respected. In some cases where an extension is seeking to introduce an innovative design, for example passivhaus, contrasting design and materials may be

permitted, but this will need a carefully considered design approach by a suitably qualified professional designer.

Side extensions should take into account the existing spacing between houses in the street – preserving gaps where they are an important part of a street's character to avoid cramped development and the creation of a 'terracing' affect, where gaps between houses are removed. It is usual for a larger space between houses at first floor than at ground floor, so ground floor side extensions may, in some circumstances, be considered acceptable.



Acceptable side extensions in streets of similarly designed semi-detached houses in the outer suburbs.

In areas where large detached houses are set within spacious grounds, side and rear extensions should reflect the architectural characteristics of the original building. In streets where buildings are spaced out, and buildings are placed in regular plots, single storey side and rear extensions may be considered acceptable depending on space (for example 1930's semi detached houses.) In areas where housing is very close together, it is likely that only single storey rear extensions will be considered acceptable.

Terrace houses were often built with existing rear projections and these may have been extended over time. It is important that a reasonable gap is retained between the houses to ensure adequate levels of light are maintained and to avoid a 'tunnelling' effect. Single storey extensions with tiled lean-to roofs can result in significant loss of light and appear overbearing in some circumstances. A more acceptable approach would be to design an extension with a glazed roof which has a relatively shallow pitch.



Rear side extensions to terraces should be careful not to result in the loss of light and overbearing form to neighbouring properties.

Achieving architectural balance in side extensions

The scale and proportions of a side extension need to be designed carefully so they do not disrupt the architectural balance of a building. The architectural balance is the way in which the various parts of a building are seen together and how this unifies the appearance of a building and contributes to the attractiveness of a house.

The approach will differ between a building that is designed to be symmetrical and one designed to be asymmetrical. Where a house already has a symmetrical frontage the usual design approach is to set the extension back from the original building line, ensuring the width of the extension is no more than half the width of the house, and also lowering the eaves line. This will ensure the extension will be architecturally subservient and will not disrupt the existing symmetry of the design.



Side extension to a symmetrical 'double fronted' house.

In asymmetrical houses it may be considered more appropriate to have a seamless extension with a continuous building and eaves line. In these cases it is very important to have continuity in both materials and design detail to match the existing house. The width of the extension and design features, such as windows, should match up in terms of scale, size, shape and proportions with the architectural elements of the house.



A seamless side extension to an asymmetrical house.

Alterations to roofs

Roofs are a very visible part of a house and therefore careful consideration needs to be given to how an extension relates to the rest of the house and how it is viewed within the street. Important considerations include:

- installing roof lights which are straightforward to fit, are flush fitting and will result in less change to the appearance of a roof

- the degree of slope of the roof pitch. Dormer windows are more likely to be considered acceptable within roof pitches over 40 degrees and unlikely to be acceptable in roof pitches below 30 degrees as they will appear too dominant
- where dormer windows are permitted on front roof slopes or other prominent roof-slopes, ensuring these reflect the design of the original building. In most cases this will be a traditional pitched roof or catslide style dormer
- being aware that large scale dormers required for headroom are likely to only be acceptable on rear roof slopes or less prominent roof slopes unless already a feature of existing houses in the street
- protecting the privacy of neighbouring houses from being overlooked
- ensuring the form and detailing of a dormer relates to existing design features of the house, for example in design detail and materials
- making sure dormers reinforce symmetry and architectural balance, for example placing it in the same vertical line as windows below.

Note: Large 'box' style dormers are a modern way of maximising internal accommodation in roof spaces. The modern box form does not sit well on more traditional roof pitches and they can dominate over the original house and be overbearing over neighbouring houses. 'Box' style dormers are unlikely to be considered acceptable on front or other prominent roof slopes, and if they

are visible they should be set away from roof hips, verges, ridge and eaves, as well as other roof features.



Acceptable designs of roof lights and dormer windows.

Innovative designs

The aim of this guidance is not to be prescriptive but to explain common approaches to determining house extensions. In some cases an opportunity exists to create a more unusual and unique innovative design, especially if the existing house already has a unique or unusual design. Such design will need to be considered carefully and it is recommended that the householder employs a suitably qualified architect.

Further advice

This advice note only offers guidance on designing extensions. Further information will need to be obtained if the development is considered to have an impact on trees (especially in a conservation area). **For separate Building Regulations approval please contact CNC Building Control on 01603 430100.**